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Inquiries have hobbled CIA, Colby says

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Recent investigations of the Central Intelligence Agency have seriously hampered intelligence-gathering activities of the agency around the world, CIA Director William E. Colby says.

But the agency's work must continue for the good of the country, he said here Tuesday.

"THERE IS much intelligence that is accessible that we can't get now because the other side is aware of our method of operation," Colby told newsmen at a press conference in the St. Louis Club.

Colby said there is some loss of information because "they have been alerted to the fact that we're able to obtain it."

And he said foreign agents who have helped the CIA now are saying, "I'm sorry. I can't continue to do this," because of pressures produced by recent exposure of the agent's methods.

But, he said, "We live, even here in St. Louis, within 30 minutes of a nuclear missile, and we have to know what kind of missiles to expect in the future."

COLBY SAID the CIA needs to maintain up-to-date information on such things as weaponry in order to maintain adequate U.S. defenses.

Colby refused to say whether the CIA has an annual



William E. Colby

budget of \$750 million.

"I have taken the position I can't comment on that. To do so would provide the starting information from which all other information could be obtained," he said.

On the need for secrecy, Colby said: "We don't take the position that nothing can be revealed, but we also don't believe that everything should be revealed."

Colby explained that his trip to St. Louis to meet informally with a group of St. Louis leaders was part of his responsibility to make sure Americans know the nature of the CIA's intelligence-gathering efforts and the importance of continuing them.

COLBY, WHO has taken a

new, open stance as CIA director, said he has not done much traveling, and has been out of his office in Langley, Va., perhaps 10 or 12 times during the last year or year-and-a-half.

(Richard M. Helms and other former CIA directors have been somewhat inaccessible to newsmen, and efforts have been made to mask the agency's budget and even the agency's physical location in the Washington, D.C., area.)

Colby said there are "many necessary secrets in our business," but added: "We have a lot of secrets in America and we respect them."

"We have secrecy of the ballot, secrecy in grand jury testimony. We are a lot like you newsmen. We must protect the sources of our intelligence just like a newsmen. If you expose those sources, you won't be able to use them anymore."

COLBY DENIED any knowledge of a report that E. Howard Hunt was ordered to assassinate syndicated columnist Jack Anderson when Hunt was a CIA agent.

"I never heard anything about that until Sunday morning when I read it in the Washington Post," he said.

Colby said he looked into the report within the CIA, but could find no one to substantiate the allegation.

Hunt reportedly told his former CIA associates that

the order to kill Anderson was canceled at the last minute, but only after a plan had been devised to make the columnist's death appear accidental.

Colby, when asked about a CIA office in St. Louis, replied that it has two functions — to stay in touch with area informants and to "investigate applications of contractors who want to do business with us."

COLBY WOULD not say who the contractors were,

other than to indicate it might be doing business with the government in an intelligence-gathering capacity.

He said the CIA's domestic activities, which have brought charges that the agency has been spying on citizens, has diminished considerably.

The agency has been doing "other things than pure intelligence" and all have been within federal laws governing the CIA, Colby said.